

Loudoun County Government
DISABILITIES SERVICES BOARD

MINUTES

February 17, 2011

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Lovely Lall, Frank Lombardi, Tim Tozer, Tom Wlodkowski, Rowena Beatty, Ken Shipman, Angela Shirazi, Ron Hoogerwerf.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Joe Granata, Rowe Leathers, Julian Murray.

INACTIVE MEMBERS: Greg Conrow

STAFF: Catherine Motivans (DSB County Liaison Support); Andy Beacher (Director, Office of Transportation Services); Nancy Gourley (OTS); Julie Withrow (County Administration), Tim Hemstreet (Loudoun County Administrator)

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: Kelly Burk (Leesburg District)

PUBLIC: Bill Ward (LEND); Tracee Garner (LEND); Pam Forshee (VRTA).

Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.

Frank Lombardi made a special introduction of County Administrator, Tim Hemstreet, who was in attendance at the meeting.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill Ward will forward information related to legislative cuts proposed to personal care assistants that affect people with disabilities - to Catherine Motivans for further distribution to DSB members. Bill noted that LEND is working with legislators on developing a budget. He asked the DSB members, in their individual capacities, to provide whatever support they could on this matter.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Ken Shipman motioned to approve the December 2010 minutes. Ron Hoogerwerf seconded the motion. December 2010 minutes approved.

Tom Wlodkowski motioned to approve the January 2011 minutes. Lovely Lall seconded the motion. January 2011 minutes approved.

III. NEW FREEDOM GRANT

Chairman Lombardi noted that, for purposes of establishing a public record, he would discuss, to the best of his knowledge, the circumstances behind the County's decision not to pursue the New Freedom Grant. Chairman Lombardi indicated that he viewed the process as a learning experience that he hopes will help foster an ongoing, constructive dialogue regarding transportation issues concerning persons with disabilities. On that note, Mr. Lombardi asked Mr. Beacher to help explain the circumstances behind the New Freedom Grant. Nancy Gourley and Julie Withrow also joined in the discussion. According to Mr. Beacher, Ms. Gourley and Ms. Withrow:

- Andy Beacher consulted with the County administration upon receiving the grant;
- Mr. Beacher indicated that the County wanted, and needed, to better understand the scope of the need prior to applying for the grant. According to Mr. Beacher, the County was not really sure about the scope of the grant. In order to develop a service, the County needed to understand the full scope of what it was going to provide;
- Ms. Withrow stated that the lack of a comprehensive needs assessment prevented the County from moving forward;
- Mr. Beacher noted that a positive outcome of the process is that the County understands the need to develop a scope.

IV. TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Mr. Beacher reviewed the action item for discussion at the recent Transportation Land Use (TLUC) committee hearing. Mr. Beacher reviewed the recommendations made by the County staff to the full committee. They included:

- 1) Request VDOT to brief TLUC on ADA compliance requirements for sidewalks and current remediation program policy;
- 2) OTS staff partner with VDOT and County human services agencies to identify priority intersection locations that require the installation of accessible signals and availability of funding options;
- 3) The County human services agencies will identify transit needs of disabled persons they serve; Staff will work with DSB to assess resource requirements and funding options to conduct an assessment of transit needs of the disabled population in the County.

Tracee Garner identified herself as a member of the public, and not a DSB member. Ms. Garner informed Mr. Beacher that she has lived in Loudoun County for 13 years, and asked what additional data is needed in order to prove that persons with disabilities have unmet transportation needs. Mr. Garner noted that there is publicly available data that demonstrates the need. In addition, Ms. Garner expressed her frustration at the County's decision not to pursue the New Freedom Grant, which only required a 3% matching fund by the County. So, for roughly \$13,000, the County could possibly have received a nearly \$500,000 match. Ms. Garner questioned the wisdom of spending approximately \$20,000 to conduct a study to find out that persons with disabilities have unmet transportation needs when the County could have spent \$13,000 to receive a \$500,000

grant. Lastly, Ms. Garner emphasized that furthering public transportation improves the transportation options for many of Loudoun's citizens, not just persons with disabilities.

Chairman Lombardi told Ms. Garner that he appreciated her comments and that he believes the DSB is making progress on the issue of transportation.

Mr. Beacher noted that transportation studies are normally handled by the Department of Human Services. When County Administration and OTS reviewed the grant, staff felt like OTS needed to identify scope of needs. Mr. Beacher further explained that the County was concerned that the New Freedom Grant only provided funding for one year. The County was concerned about its ability to fund the services beyond the first year, especially since public transportation is essentially funded through the gas tax fund, which will be entirely devoted to the Metro rail expansion beginning in or around 2016.

Ms. Withrow stated that part of what needs to happen is that all the publicly available data mentioned by Ms. Garner should be collected and reviewed.

Nancy Gourley stated that a 20-year transportation survey conducted by the County clearly established a need for extended hours and weekend service. The County is presently working on paring down this 20-year study into a six-year plan. The extended hours and weekend service is a priority, but there needs to be funding, she said. Ms. Gourley noted that she hopes to provide the six-year plan to the Board of Supervisors by the spring of 2011.

Ken Shipman asked if the DSB could review the draft prior to submission to the Board of Supervisors. Ms. Gourley said she would share the draft with the DSB. The six-year plan will take the County up to the point of the Metro rail expansion.

Ms. Gourley stated that the County adopted the Countywide Transportation Plan in July 2010. As part of this process, the Commonwealth of Virginia requires the County to prepare the 6-year plan. According to Ms. Gourley, the state will not provide any funding to the County until the completion of the six-year plan.

Mr. Wlodkowski interjected that the County should think about establishing a pilot program. He also brought up the issue of taxis, and whether the County has any regulations on taxis. Mr. Beacher responded that Mr. Hemstreet has asked him to further look into this issue. Mr. Wlodkowski noted that he is fortunate enough to have a wife who can drive. But, when she is out of town or otherwise unavailable, he needs to resort to taxis to get his children to after-school activities. By way of example, Mr. Wlodkowski explained that it can cost \$20 roundtrip to travel three miles from his house to his son's school, which is about a five minute drive.

Mr. Wlodkowski also commented that the County needs to look at the relationship between VRT and Loudoun County Government and establish formal agreements for service, if there are none. In response to a question from Mr. Wlodkowski asking if VRT could have applied for the New Freedom Grant, Mr. Beacher stated that Virginia

Regional Transit (VRT) could have applied for the grant without the County. However, that being stated, VRT would have required a matching grant in the outlying years, which, as stated earlier, is a concern of the County.

Supervisor Burk noted that the taxi issue is interesting. She indicated that she has tried to delve into the issue of taxi regulations in the past, but has not been very successful. She urged the DSB to lobby for this effort.

Bill Ward asked if the County could look into the availability of taxis that can accommodate wheel chairs. Chairman Lombardi echoed Mr. Ward's sentiments and noted his own frustrations when trying to rely on taxis because of their unwillingness to accommodate persons with wheelchairs.

Supervisor Burk lauded the DSB efforts in the area of transportation and encouraged the members to keep fighting and advocating for persons with disabilities. She noted that the DSB needs to continually educate persons without disabilities because they do not understand the issues that persons with disabilities face.

Mr. Wlodkowski suggested that the New Freedom Grant process needs to be looked at as an opportunity. He is concerned that the County relies too heavily on the human services organizations to determine the needs of persons with disabilities. Accordingly, he noted that the County needs to be cautious in how it goes about collecting data regarding persons with disabilities because many people with disabilities do not self-identify and do not use County human services. Mr. Wlodkowski also cautioned that any survey or data collection must project into and account for future needs and growth. Ms. Withrow agreed with Mr. Wlodkowski in that the County needs to be careful in how it collects the data.

Chairman Lombardi noted that MetroAccess has its own set of issues and problems. Mr. Beacher stated that the County will be required to provide para-transit access when the Metro rail arrives and it is looking into available options.

Mr. Tozer asked whether there is a County policy that prevents or prohibits the County from applying for grants even if the County does not have funding available in the outlying years. Ms. Withrow stated that she is not aware of any such prohibition.

Mr. Wlodkowski stated that the County needs to take some bold steps forward. He said he felt that the County should not miss opportunities like the New Freedom Grant in the future. Also, he stated that the County cannot wait until 2016 to take action.

Mr. Shipman noted that there is no point looking backwards, and that our focus needs to be on the future. To that end, we need to work collaboratively to gather the available data.

Mr. Wlodkowski suggested the County consult with outside experts, including the U.S. Access Board to better understand transportation-related issues facing persons with disabilities. Mr. Beacher said he would speak with Ms. Motivans about this suggestion.

V. TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT SCOPE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Withrow suggested that, as a starting point, all of the available studies, surveys, etc. regarding transportation-related issues concerning persons with disabilities, be collected.

Mr. Wlodkowski asked Ms. Forshee how VRT was tracking unmet needs. According to Ms. Forshee, she had compiled a 15-day picture based on calls coming into VRT. Those calls resulted in 11 unmet needs (VRT could not pick-up the caller because of lack of available buses/schedules). Supervisor Burk asked if VRT could provide the unmet needs data to the DSB.

Mr. Wlodkowski asked if VRT could provide the costs to run all demand routes on weekends and extended hours on week nights.

Chairman Lombardi said that we need to find out what information is available and speak with others about how to best proceed.

Mr. Hemstreet reiterated his prior commitment to work with the DSB to improve access for persons with disabilities throughout the County. With respect to the needs assessment, Mr. Hemstreet agreed that, at the end of the day, the issue does boil down to how much the additional service will cost. The DSB will need to convince the Board of Supervisors that this will be money well spent. In addition, Mr. Hemstreet said that the County does have an obligation to see if can continue to provide funding for services when grant money runs out. Mr. Hemstreet also noted that the gas tax funding will be diverted to the Metro rail expansion, and that the County will need to find additional resources.

Supervisor Burk asked who would be responsible for developing a scope for the needs assessment. The following agreed to be part of the team: Ms. Withrow; Ms. Motivans; Mr. Beacher; Tom Wlodkowski; Ken Shipman; and Tim Tozer. The team will work on developing the scope over the next 30 days.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Village at Leesburg Update

Ron Hoogerwerf said that he will touch base with the Village of Leesburg. Mr. Lombardi provided a brief summary of permit and bid issues that have delayed construction of new handicapped street parking spots.

B. Kincora

Chairman Lombardi indicated that he had placed a call to a representative of Kincora, but did not receive a call to set up a meeting. Supervisor Burk stated that she would provide Mr. Lombardi with some assistance in this effort.

C. Close Captioning of Board of Supervisors' Meetings

Supervisor Burk asked for an update on a citizen complaint that BOS meetings were not closed-captioned. Catherine noted that she had spoken with PIO about this, and that they had confirmed that Board of Supervisors meetings, Transportation Land Use committee meetings and Planning Commission meetings are close-captioned when they are re-broadcast on the local cable station via Comcast and FIOS TV.

VII. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Motivans noted that Chairman and Lombardi and she were on Inside Loudoun. She will send a link to the webcast to DSB members. Ms. Motivans reported that Mr. Lombardi did an excellent job representing the DSB.

Ms. Motivans noted that the County has agreed to provide funding for a DSB member to attend the Accessibility Summit in McLean, Virginia. Chairman Frank Lombardi will represent the DSB this year. Catherine will attend as well.

Ms. Motivans indicated that she is working with Ms. Withrow to obtain bids for DSB business cards to be printed first, in ink and then in Braille, to determine if it the cost is justified.

A motion to adjourn was passed at 8:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 17, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.